

June 2, 2009

Lori & Gordon Swan
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Dear Representatives,

We have a twelve year old son, named Michael Swan. He loves horses, Disney, movies, computers, and spending time with his friends. Michael also has autism.

Michael was diagnosed with autism in August 1999 at the age of 2 years and 9 months. Since then we have spent a large amount of our time searching for appropriate doctors, therapies and services for him. We have also gone into a lot of debt. We have Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan for insurance and they have been of little help in covering services and therapies for Michael. They have refused to pay for the majority of therapies that are needed for Michael. Michael goes to horse therapy, music therapy, recreational therapy, auditory integration therapy, speech therapy, and occupational therapy. He has an applied verbal behavior program, sensory integration program and educational program that we run at home. Michael's insurance does not cover any of these. The costs are insurmountable, and have put us into deep debt.

Michael's nine year old brother has had developmental delays due to health issues as a baby and also needed therapy for the first five years of his life. The same therapies, speech, occupational, and physical therapies were covered for him at the same time his brother was denied coverage. This was because Michael had autism and his little brother does not.

The therapy costs now are nothing compared to what help for Michael will cost for the rest of his life. If Michael gets the help now, he has a much greater chance of not needing the help as an adult. We were told that speech therapy would not help Michael because he was autistic and would not ever talk. Michael began talking at the age of eight, two weeks after starting Applied Verbal Behavior therapy. With the right help anything is possible for these kids. Still at the age of 12 he continues to make progress everyday.

Please help us and the autism community to be able to get the coverage they need to get the medical services and therapies that can help them so much. It is the right thing to do for our kids.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lori & Gordon Swan